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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EAP/ANP, IO/SHA MEHRA

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TAGS: [OPDC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NZ](#)

SUBJECT: WEOG ROTATION: NEW ZEALAND FM RESPONSE

REF: A. STATE 209853

1B. STATE 172297

11. (SBU) Post delivered the letter (reftels) on WEOG rotation in the UN Commission of Human Rights (CHR) from Secretary Powell to New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff on August

116. On October 12 the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) provided the Ambassador a copy of Goff's response, which reiterated the GoNZ's support for a CHR WEOG rotation scheme similar to that proposed by the Dutch and Canadians. Goff noted that New Zealand's will seek to ensure that any rotational scheme enable New Zealand's own candidature for the CHR in 2009) 2011.

12. (SBU) Goff also expressed reservations about transparency in any adopted scheme, and any suggestion of altering universal membership in the CHR. Goff noted that the GoNZ supports engaging with countries that violate human rights, versus exclusion. Goff reaffirmed the GoNZ's commitment to improving the overall effectiveness of the CHR, both by advocating a reduction in redundant resolutions, and by remaining actively engaged in negotiating resolution texts.

13. (SBU) MFAT informed Post that they have delivered the original of the letter through their Embassy in Washington. Text of letter follows:

The Honourable Colin Powell
Secretary of State

SIPDIS
Department of State
WASHINGTON DC

Dear Mr Secretary

Thank you for your letter of 10 August about the rotation scheme for membership of the Commission of Human Rights.

New Zealand fully supports the development of a fair and workable proposal for a rotational scheme for WEOG membership of the CHR along the lines of the one the Dutch and Canadians have been trying to take forward. We are involved in the negotiations taking place about reviving the scheme. In terms of New Zealand's interests we shall be seeking to ensure than any rotational scheme agreed takes into account our candidature for the Commission for the 2009-2011 period. It is also important to us that any negotiations on a rotational scheme be transparent. We hope that those few WEOG countries in Europe continuing to seek longer terms for themselves will withdraw their objections to the proposals under consideration.

As to the question you raise about criteria for membership of the CHR, while we appreciate US concerns that those that violate human rights in their own countries should not be setting international norms, we see difficulties in a system which would classify some countries as being "appropriate" and others as "inappropriate". Our approach is to engage with countries which violate human rights rather than seek to exclude them. Indeed in this regard we support universal membership of the Commission.

I can assure you that New Zealand, which currently has Observer status on the Commission, will continue to demonstrate our concerns about human rights abuses by active involvement in negotiations on the texts of resolutions and, where appropriate, co-sponsorship of them. We shall also continue to press for reforms in the way the CHR operates, for example, by advocating the rationalisation of resolutions to avoid unnecessary annual repetition.

Yours sincerely

(signature)
Hon Phil Goff
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade

End text.
Burnett